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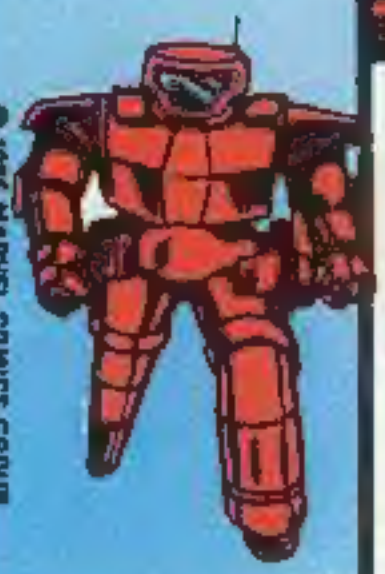

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75¢ U.K. 40p CAN. 95c

2 NOV

new universe™

SPITFIRE

and the TROUBLESHOOTERS!™

FOR THE LIFE OF A TROUBLESHOOTER-- SPITFIRE VS. THE DEATH TANK!

new universe

BEHEMOTH

PARKER'S HILL, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NOT FAR FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE LINE.

SINCE SHE WAS A KID, SHUTTLING FROM ONE UNIVERSITY TOWN TO ANOTHER AT THE SIDE OF HER FAMOUS FATHER, JENNY SIVENSEN HAS PRIDED HERSELF ON HAVING A *FULL* LIFE.

BUT NOTHING-- *NOTHING* -- EVER PREPARED HER FOR THE LAST TWO WEEKS; HER LIFE HAS NEVER *BEEN* SO FULL.

AND IT'S MAKING HER JUST A LITTLE BIT CRAZY.

C'MON, ANDY--THIS IS THE *THIRD* BOULDER I'VE LIFTED IN THE LAST TEN MINUTES.

HAVEN'T YOU GOTTEN A POWER-USAGE READING *YET* WITH ALL THAT TELEMETRY EQUIPMENT THE TROUBLESHOOTERS BROUGHT DOWN FROM *M.I.T.* WHEN THEY WERE HERE LAST NIGHT?

I-I'VE GOT IT, JENNY--I JUST DON'T *BELIEVE* IT.

THE STRENGTH-TO-WEIGHT RATIO ON THE *M.A.X.* SUIT IS ABSOLUTELY *INCREDIBLE!* AND, UH--HEY--DO YOU *SMELL* SOMETHING--?

GERRY CONWAY SCRIPT | HERB TRIMPE PENCILS | BOB McLEOD INKS | RICK PARKER LETTERS | GEORGE ROUSSOS COLOR | BOB HARRAS EDITOR | JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF

SPITFIRE AND THE TROUBLESHOOTERS ™ Vol. 1, No. 2, November, 1986. Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Group Vice-President, Mill Schiffman, Vice President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Published monthly.
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POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO SPITFIRE AND THE TROUBLESHOOTERS, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016.

SAY, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THE SUIT'S VENTILATORS *ARE* PICKING UP THE WEIRDEST--

UNG.

HELLO THERE.

YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE A SWEET LITTLE PUTTYCAT WITH A WHITE STRIPE PAINTED DOWN YOUR BACK *WOULD* YOU?

NO, I DIDN'T *THINK* SO.

YOU KNOW, ANDY, WHEN THAT STRANGER CAME BY TO WARN US TO BE CAREFUL USING THE *M.A.X.* * SUIT'S POWERS **--HE SHOULD HAVE WARNED US TO AVOID *SKUNKS* WHILE HE WAS AT IT.

P.YEW!

* MAN AMPLIFIED X-PERIMENT
** STAR BRAND #2 -- 608.

NOW I KNOW WHY I NEVER LIKED THIS PLACE, FAMILY LAND HOLDING OR *NO* FAMILY LAND HOLDING.. SNIFF..

UH, YOU WANT, I'LL GET A BUCKET OF WATER AND SOME *SOAP*

DON'T BOTHER--A DUNK IN THE *LAKE* SHOULD WASH AWAY SOME OF--

HUH? DO YOU HEAR THAT?

SOMETHING CRASHING THROUGH THE WOODS. DIRECTIONAL MIKES PINPOINT THE SOUND--UP THAT *HILL* OVER--

OBOY.

THOSE *HUNTERS* MUST'VE TAKEN A WRONG TURN OFF THE MAIN ROAD--

"-- AND WITH ALL THE RAIN WE HAD THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE DIRT TRACK'S SLIPPERY WITH *MUD*.

SKTHUD!

"THEY'RE GOING TO *LOSE* IT-- UNLESS SOMEBODY *DOES* SOMETHING."

SOMEBODY LIKE *ME*--?

JENNY, THAT WEIRD GUY TOLD YOU NOT TO USE THE *SUIT* UNLESS IT WAS ABSOLUTELY *NECESSARY*. MAYBE WE SHOULD LISTEN TO HIM.

IF PEOPLE FIND OUT--REMEMBER, THE *POLICE* THINK THE *M.A.X.* WAS STOLEN--THAT GUY *KROTZE* IS STILL THE OFFICIAL *OWNER* AND--

ANDY, I CAN'T *CARE* ABOUT THAT.

I WISH ANDY HADN'T BROUGHT THAT GUY UP.

WHOEVER HE WAS WAS TALKING ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY. HE FEELS HE HAS TO KEEP *HIS* POWER HIDDEN. WELL, THAT'S FINE FOR HIM.

OY, SHE'S DOING IT AGAIN-- REVEALING HERSELF! DOESN'T SHE REALIZE THAT GUY WASN'T KIDDING WHEN HE WARNED US? HE TWISTED A WRENCH WITH HIS BARE HANDS, FOR CRIPE'S SAKE!

FRITZ KROTZE MAY *OWN* THE M.A.X. LEGALLY--BUT MY FATHER DESIGNED AND *BUILT* IT--

HMMMMMM

--AND I BELIEVE KROTZE *KILLED* HIM BECAUSE DAD THREATENED TO TAKE THE SUIT AWAY. ACTIVATING *ELECTRO-MAGNETIC CLAMP*

SPTANG--

KCIK!

THAT STRANGER MAY NOT AGREE, BUT I THINK THAT MAKES THE SUIT MINE MORALLY--*MY* RESPONSIBILITY.

I'VE GOT TO USE *SPITFIRE* THE WAY DAD *INTENDED*.

HELPING PEOPLE.

SAVING *LIVES*.

"THAT'S *MY* IDEA OF RESPONSIBILITY! AND IF OUR EVENING VISITOR DOESN'T AGREE, WELL --

YOU *SAW* THAT--?

"--WHO *MADE HIM* KING?"

LIKE SOME KINDA *BIG ROBOT!*

NOBODY'S EVER GONNA BELIEVE THIS.

UH, HEY... WHAT'S THAT *SMELL*..?

THAT NIGHT, IN A CLEARING LARGE ENOUGH TO CONTAIN THE SPECIALLY DESIGNED TRUCKS THAT COMPRISE THE LATE KARL SWENSEN'S LAB...

HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK WE'LL HAVE TO HIDE OUT UP HERE, JEN?

YOU KNOW I'LL DO ANYTHING TO HELP-- BUT I'VE GOT CLASSES BACK AT THE TUTE,* AND MY PROFESSORS ARE PROBABLY WONDERING...

WE HAVEN'T BEGUN TO EXPLORE SPITFIRE'S CAPABILITIES, ANDY.

*MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.

STILL, YOU'RE RIGHT. WE CAN'T LEAVE OUR LIVES ON HOLD FOREVER.

MY LEAVE WON'T LAST MUCH LONGER. I WANT TO GET BACK TO TEACHING.

HERE'S ONE FOR THE BELIEVE IT OR DON'T FILE, ABIGAIL.

I HAVE A FEELING OUR LIVES MAY NOT BE ON HOLD MUCH LONGER, JEN. LOOK.

THIS MORNING, THREE LOCAL HUNTERS MET UP WITH A HIGH-TECH VERSION OF BIGFOOT-- OR SO THEY SAY.

ACCORDING TO MALCOLM KEECH, HE AND HIS FRIENDS WERE SAVED FROM A NASTY ACCIDENT BY A GIANT ROBOT. RIGHT, MR. KEECH?

EH-YUP. BIG AS A HOUSE WITH GLOWIN' RED EYES. SCARED THE SPIT RIGHT OUTTA BILL, HERE.

YOU THINK KROTZE WILL SEE THIS?

I HOPE NOT, ANDY. I'M NOT READY TO CONFRONT HIM-- YET.

CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS. THE CAMPUS DORMS OF M.I.T...

WHAT THIS ROBOT WAS DOING IN THE NORTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE WOODS NEITHER KEECH NOR HIS COMPANIONS COULD SAY.

SOUNDS LIKE A MECHANICAL NATURE LOVER, PHIL. [CHUCKLE] WELL, ON THE SERIOUS SIDE OF THE NEWS...

GREAT. IF THIS WASN'T "SWEEPS" WEEK, NO T.V. STATION EVER WOULD HAVE CARRIED THAT STORY.

AND JENNY DID GO PUBLIC ONCE BEFORE WHEN SHE RESCUED THAT KID.* THIS IS THE SECOND SIGHTING.

*SEE STAR BRAND #2.

IF KROTZE SEES IT HE WON'T NEED A PHD IN LOGIC TO MAKE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS "GIANT ROBOT" SIGHTING AND DR. SWENSEN'S M.A.X. SUIT.

WHAT'LL WE DO, GUYS?

HOW CAN WE WARN JENNY AND ANDY?

I'D SAY IT'S A SAFE BET THEY ALREADY KNOW, ERIC.

MIT

TERRY RAISED THE REAL QUESTION: DOES KROTZE KNOW- AND IF SO, WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

I COULD RIG A MOLE PROGRAM TO BURROW THROUGH HIS COMPANY'S COMPUTER DATABASE..

--BUT THAT WOULDN'T TELL US WHAT HE'S THINKING.

THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY...

SURE THERE IS.

WE KNOW THE LAYOUT OF KROTZE'S RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT COMPLEX-- WE WENT THERE ON A FIELD TRIP LAST MONTH.

LET'S JUST SLIP IN AND DO A LITTLE SCOUT-WORK.

YEAH, GIOTTI, BUT WHAT IF WE'RE CAUGHT?

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT POSSIBILITY-- WITH THESE.

SEE? I ADAPTED THE M.A.X. SERVO-MOTOR DESIGN FOR INCREASED STRENGTH- WEIGHT RATIO. BUILT MYSELF A PAIR OF "STRONG-ARMS."

YOU DID THIS IN JUST TWO WEEKS?

WOW.

FOR A WEIGHT-LIFTER, YOU'RE SMARTER THAN YOU LOOK, GIOTTI.

HA-HA, FERRIS. COMING FROM A JOCK LIKE YOU, THAT'S A REAL TICKLER.

TERRY, HAND ME THAT INDUSTRIAL BALL BEARING.

THANKS. NOW WATCH.

IT'S STRANGE, Y'KNOW? BUT AFTER STUDYING PROFESSOR SWENSON'S DOCUMENTS, EVERYTHING SEEMED SO CLEAR. THE WHOLE FIELD OF HUERISTICS SEEMED LIKE A PLAYTHING TO HIM...

IN HIS NOTES HE WROTE THAT HIS MIND FELT IT WAS RACING AT 100 MPH. HE SAW CONNECTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES HE NEVER ENVISIONED BEFORE. BUILDING THIS ENHANCED M.A.X. WAS ALMOST AN INSPIRATION.

SKRUMMMMP

PRETTY WEIRD, HUH?

EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED THE LAST FEW WEEKS SEEMS WEIRD TO *ME*, GIOTTI. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST BECAUSE I'M A *FRESHMAN*.

LET'S WORRY ABOUT THE WHYS AFTER WE'VE DEALT WITH THE *HOWS*.

EVEN WITH YOUR *STRONG-ARMS*, EDDIE--

MIT

--*HOW* DO WE GET INTO KROTZE'S PLACE UNSEEN?

TRUST ME. WITH THESE ON, I FEEL LIKE WE CAN DO *ANY-THING*.

TERRY'S A COMPUTER SYSTEMS ENGINEER, RIGHT?

SO SHE'LL RIG A BYPASS FOR THE ALARM SYSTEM. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE FENCE. THE REST OF YOU JUST STAY CLOSE.

EDDIE'S ALWAYS BEEN *HEADSTRONG*-- BUT THIS IS PLAIN *RECKLESS*.

IT'S *JENNY*--HE'S GOT A *CRUSH* ON HER AND HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO *HELP* HER.

AND I GUESS *I'LL* DO ANYTHING TO HELP *HIM*...

KROTZE INTERNATIONAL, MAIN HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX, TWENTY MILES OUTSIDE BOSTON.

I TAPED THE BROADCAST SO YOU COULD SEE IT *YOURSELF*, FAYLEN.

DO YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT THOSE MEN SAW OR SWENSEN'S *M.A.X.*?

ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THEY WERE *DRUNK*— OR THAT THEY JUST *IMAGINED* THEY--

NO, FAYLEN. THAT *ISN'T* A POSSIBILITY.

I WANT THAT SUIT--I WANT SWENSEN'S LAB--AND YOU'RE GOING TO *GET* THEM FOR ME. USING "*BEHEMOTH*." I'VE ORDERED IT READY FOR TRANSPORT.

BEHEMOTH? BUT, MR. KROTZE, THAT'S A *DEFENSE DEPARTMENT* PROJECT. IF SOMETHING WENT *WRONG*...

I HAVE BLANKET *AUTHORIZATION* FOR FIELD TESTS ON FEDERAL LAND, FAYLEN.

THOSE HUNTERS SPOTTED THE *M.A.X.* JUST THREE MILES FROM A FEDERAL RESERVE--

IF ANYONE GETS *HURT*--

--THE *D.O.D.* WILL HANDLE THE NECESSARY COVER-UP AS A MATTER OF *POLICY*.

BUT COULDN'T YOU FIND SOMEONE *ELSE* TO--

NO ONE ELSE KNOWS *BEHEMOTH* AS WELL AS YOU DO. WITH SWENSEN DEAD, YOU'RE MY TOP SYSTEMS ENGINEER.

AND I KNOW THINGS ABOUT YOU, FAYLEN. *PERSONAL* THINGS.

IF I REVEAL WHAT I KNOW, YOU'LL LOSE YOUR *SECURITY CLEARANCE*, YOU'D NEVER WORK AGAIN.

THAT'S WHY I TRUST *YOU* FAYLEN, AND ONLY-- EH?

BZZZT

THAT'S MY *PRIVATE* LINE. I THINK WE'VE TALKED LONG ENOUGH, DON'T YOU?

YES, YES, I SUPPOSE WE HAVE...

SWENSEN WAS *BRILLIANT*, BUT *UNRELIABLE*. AT LEAST, WITH A WORM LIKE *FAYLEN*, YOU KNOW WHERE YOU STAND.

KROTZE.

YES... I DID PROMISE *THE CLUB* I'D RECOVER SWENSEN'S *MAX*-- BUT IT'S ONLY BEEN *TWO WEEKS*-- AND NOW I'M *SURE* WE'LL--

YES. *ABSO-LUTELY.* YOU HAVE MY *PERSONAL* GUARANTEE.

FRITZE KROTZE LISTENS TO THE DEAD PHONE'S ELECTRIC HUM A FULL *MINUTE* BEFORE HANGING UP.

IF PROF. RICHARD FAYLEN COULD SEE HIS EMPLOYER NOW, HE MIGHT *RECOG-NIZE* THE EXPRES-SION ON FRITZ KROTZE'S FACE.

IT'S ONE HE KNOWS TOO WELL, FROM SEEING IT IN HIS OWN BATHROOM *MIRROR*.

FEAR. NAKED *FEAR.*

MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE...

THAT'S GOTTA BE THE SECURITY SYSTEM TER-MINAL, EDUARDO--ALL THE LINES TRACE BACK TO THAT POLE.

BUT DO YOU THINK *TERESA* SHOULD--

I SAID I WOULD, DIDN'T I?

HERE'S WHERE ALL THAT *LEDGE-WALKING* AT THE TUTE FINALLY *PAYS OFF* LOOK MA, *NO VERTIGO.*

WHICH MAKES ME WONDER--WHAT *WOULD* MOM SAY IF SHE KNEW WHAT HER BRAINY LITTLE GIRL-CHILD WAS LEARNING AT *COLLEGE...?*

OK, BOYS-- THE CURRENT'S OFF. IT'S SAFE TO TOUCH THE FENCE.

C'MON. BACK IN PHILLY, ONE A MY DAD'S FRIENDS USED TO RIP PHONE-BOOKS IN HALF AT PARTIES.

ALWAYS ADMIRED THAT GUY.

RIPP

GIOTTI'S REALLY INTO THIS, ISN'T HE?

YEAH--MAYBE TOO INTO IT IF YOU ASK ME.

ERIC'S RIGHT. GIOTTI'S ACTING LIKE THIS IS JUST ANOTHER 'TUTE HAOK.

BUT WHAT WE'RE DOING-- IT'S A LOT MORE SERIOUS THAN FLOODING THE M.I.T. GYM WITH MAYONNAISE. SOMEBODY COULD GET--

HEY! THAT'S DR. FAYLEN!

FAYLEN HUH? KROTZE'S PET BRAIN. HE SPOKE AT THE TOUR WE -WHOA!

WHAT'S THAT?

A TRAIN!

NO, REALLY?

I SEE IT'S A TRAIN, FERRIS, AND I SEE KROTZE'S PEOPLE ARE LINKING IT UP WITH A FLATCAR. THEY'RE KEEPING SOMETHING UNDER WRAPS THERE

WHAT I DON'T SEE IS WHY FAYLEN'S GETTING ABOARD? WE SHOULD-- WAITASECOND. LISTEN.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE US TO REACH THE SIDING NEAR PARKER'S MILL?

TWO HOURS, MR. FAYLEN, A LITTLE AFTER DAWN.

UH-HUH. THOUGHT SO.

FAYLEN'S AFTER JENNY. I'M NOT LETTING THAT CREEP OUT OF MY SIGHT.

EDDIE, GET SERIOUS. YOU CAN T--

LONG AS I'M WEARIN' THESE STRONGARMS FERRIS THERE'S NOT A WHOLE LOT I CAN'T DO!

FOLLOW IN THE VAN, O.K.? I'LL KEEP IN TOUCH THROUGH THE M.A.X COM-LINK

EDDIE! EDUARDO! GET BACK HERE! YOU IDIOT!

"OH, GREAT."

TIM, THIS ISN'T WHAT WE *PLANNED*-- EDDIE'S GONE *CRAZY*--!

TELL ME ABOUT IT, TERRY.

C'MON, WE BETTER DO WHAT HE *SAID*--FOLLOW IN THE VAN—

"--AND JUST *HOPE* HE DOESN'T GET HIMSELF *KILLED*."

THIS IS *TERRIFIC*.

TRAIN'S MOVING CLOSE TO 80 MPH -- THE WIND'S BURNING MY EYES--

--I'M HANG'N' ON BY *ONE HAND*, AND MY ARM DOESN'T EVEN FEEL THE *STRAIN*!

ONLY TROUBLE IS, I CAN'T TELL WHAT FAYLEN'S DOING INSIDE THIS *BOXCAR*

WELL, HEY, I CAN FIX *THAT*.

I'M TRYING TO RAISE GIOTTI'S *COM-LINK* TIM, BUT HE WON'T *ANSWER*!

IS HE ALL RIGHT? CAN YOU SEE WHAT HE'S *DOING*?

AW, *NO*.

"HE'S TEARING A *HOLE* IN THE BOXCAR ROOF! HE REALLY *IS* CRAZY!"

LIKE PEELING AN *ORANGE*!

SRUNCH

WELL, MAYBE A LITTLE *MONSTER*.

BUT WITH ALL THE RATTLING AND CREAKING OF THESE OLD RAILS, I DON'T GUESS ANYBODY WILL HEAR A--HUH?

ERIC'TIM! YOU GUYS YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT I

SKRAAAKK!

YOUWWW!

HE GETS OFF ONE WILD CRY--LESS FEARFUL THAN SHOCKED.

THEN THERE'S NOTHING BUT--

-- SILENCE TIM! HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT-- I DON'T KNOW-- AND THERE WAS THIS RIPPING NOISE, AND THEN HE YELLED, AND NOW THERE'S NOTHING.

YOU DON'T THINK HE'S--?

CALM DOWN, ERIC EDDIE CAN HANDLE HIMSELF

S-SURE HE'S OK, HE'S GOTTA BE OK WE'LL JUST--UH-- WE'LL JUST FOLLOW THE TRAIN.

THAT'S WHAT WE'LL DO

EVEN AS HE TRIES TO REASSURE HIS FRIENDS, TIM FERRIS FIGHTS TO KEEP THE HORROR FROM HIS VOICE

BUT WHEN HE FEELS TERESA ROBERTS' HAND TIGHTEN ON HIS SHOULDER, HE KNOWS HE HASN'T SUCCEEDED.

DAWN, IN THE LITTLE NEW HAMPSHIRE TOWN OF PARKER'S MILL.

JENNY SWENSEN SPENT A RESTLESS NIGHT, REPLAYING HER ACTIONS OF THE DAY BEFORE OVER AND OVER-- WONDERING WHAT SHE COULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY

ON THE DRIVE INTO TOWN FOR PROVISIONS, SHE DECIDES SHE NEEDS A SECOND OPINION.

SENSEI? JENNY SWENSEN I DON'T WAKE YOU?

THE REASON I CALLED I NEED SOME ADVICE I'M IN TROUBLE. I DID SOMETHING ILLEGAL-- BUT IT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL--

--BUT HOW CAN I EXPLAIN THAT TO THE POLICE?

AND THERE'S SOMEBODY ELSE, SOMEONE WHO DID DO SOMETHING ILLEGAL- BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT- AT LEAST, I DON'T THINK I CAN--AND NOW I'VE-

JENNIFER, YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE I TEACH TAI CHI-- I DO NOT TRANSLATE HYSTERIA

I HEAR CONFUSION IN YOUR VOICE, AND PAIN-- AND PERHAPS SHAME. YOU ARE A BRIGHT WOMAN, A SCIENTIST, A SEEKER OF FINAL TRUTHS-- AND YOUR FEELINGS BEWILDER YOU

HERE IS MY ADVICE SORT YOUR EMOTIONS. IDENTIFY YOUR DIFFICULTY.

THEN CONFRONT YOUR PROBLEM-- DO NOT HIDE FROM IT. THE PROBLEM WE DON'T FACE TODAY MAY DESTROY US TOMORROW.

I NEED ADVICE AND HE GIVES ME FORTUNE COOKIE WISDOM

C'MON, ANDY, LET'S GO HOME.

AND WHERE'S HOME, JEN? A TRAILER IN THE WOODS? THE SENSEI IS RIGHT...

"—I HAVE BEEN AVOIDING A CONFRONTATION WITH KROTZE

"SO, JEN, IF YOU'RE REALLY SO SMART—"

—WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

WE'VE BEEN CROUCHED HERE ALMOST AN HOUR, WATCHING THAT TRAIN SIT ON A SIDING EVER SINCE IT ARRIVED.

WHY AREN'T WE HELPING EDDIE? JEN & CAMP CAN'T BE MORE THAN A MILE FROM HERE. IN SPITFIRE, SHE COULD—

JUST A SECOND TERESA. SOMETHING'S HAPPENING.

"LOOK."

"THOSE GUYS ARE LOSENING THE TARP LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GONNA SEE WHAT FAYLEN'S UP TO."

POKE ME SOME-BODY.

ON SECOND THOUGHT, DON'T. IF THIS ISN'T A DREAM, I DON'T WANT TO KNOW IT!

WE'VE GOTTA WARN JEN. THIS MEANS KROTZE IS PLAYING FOR KEEPS. HE DOESN'T JUST WANT THE SUIT...HE WANTS HER DEAD, TOO!

SOMETIME LATER, A HALF MILE AWAY

THE TRUTH IS, I DON'T WANT A CONFRONTATION WITH KROTZE, WITH ANYONE.

THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT A TEMPER. DAD ALWAYS TOLD ME—

JEN," HE SAID, "YOU'RE LIKE YOUR MOTHER. YOU'D SOONER THROW A TANTRUM THAN CONFRONT UN-PLEASANT REALITY."

AND THE REALITY I DON'T WANT TO FACE HERE IS

—I DON'T HAVE ANY SOLID PROOF KROTZE HAD MY FATHER KILLED.

BUT HOW CAN I GET PROOF AS LONG AS I STAY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE?

ANSWER, JEN-GIRL, YOU CAN'T. WHICH MEANS—

SPARK

ANDY, STOP THE JEEP!

SOMETHING'S COMING THROUGH THE WOODS!

I SEE IT, JEN! I SEE IT!

ONCE, WHEN JENNY WAS A LITTLE GIRL, SHE KICKED AN ANTHILL. SHE NEVER DID IT AGAIN.

IN HER CHILD'S MIND, SHE IMAGINED SHE COULD HEAR THE THUNDERING ROAR OF COLLAPSING EARTH, THE GARGANTUAN SHOCK-WAVE OF HER GIANT'S FOOT SMASHING THAT TINY WORLD.

IN HER CHILD'S MIND, SHE IMAGINED THE ANTS' FRANTIC CRIES OF HORROR AS UNEXPLAINED DEATH RUMBLED OVER THEM RELENTLESS AND IRRESISTIBLE.

RUMMBLE

SEVEN YEARS OLD, SHE CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF AN APPARENTLY UNCARING UNIVERSE.

TODAY SHE MEETS THAT POWER AGAIN.

AND SHE KNOWS, AT LAST, EXACTLY HOW THOSE ANTS FELT LONG AGO...

J- JENNY-- WHAT IS IT--?

TANK-- SOME KIND OF SUPER-TANK!

KROTZE HAS CONTRACTS WITH THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT-- MUST HAVE DEVELOPED THIS FOR THEM-- NOW HE'S SENT IT AFTER ME-!

CRUMP!

AT LAST! SO KROTZE WAS RIGHT! WE HAVE HER ON THE MAIN SCREEN.

MOTION SENSORS, HEAT SENSORS, ALL GUIDANCE SYSTEMS LOCKED ON TARGET

OF COURSE IT'S THE SUIT WE WANT. SHE CAN LEAD US TO HER CAMP. LET'S GIVE HER AN-- INCENTIVE.

FOOOM!

RUN AND!

IT-- MISSED US?

NOT ON YOUR LIFE, MEADOWS!

FAM!

UHNH!

RUMMMBBLE!

DON'T-- DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU *MEAN*...!

WHOEVER'S DRIVING THAT THING IS *PLAYING* WITH US, ANDY

GIVING US A CHANCE TO *RUN*--

--HOPING WE'LL LEAD HIM STRAIGHT TO THE M.A.X. SUIT AND DADS LAB!

THEY PROBABLY THINK I'LL *FIGHT BACK*-- THE WAY I DID IN THAT *QUARRY* TWO WEEKS AGO *

BUT I'VE GOT A *SURPRISE* FOR THEM.

* LAST ISSUE -- BOB

WE'RE *PULLING OUT*. FAST AS THAT TANK IS, OUR TRUCKS ARE *FASTER*. WE'LL BE GONE BEFORE IT GETS HERE.

DAD DIDN'T BUILD *SPITFIRE* AS SOME KIND OF SUPER WAR TOY. I WON'T DEFAME HIS *MEMORY* WITH ANOTHER POINTLESS *BATTLE*.

SOUNDS OK TO ME.

THINK WE CAN DISENGAGE THE TRUCK LOCK BEFORE

JENNY! WOW ARE WE GLAD TO SEE YOU.

WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO *FREAK* OUT *SPITFIRE* OURSELVES

EDUARDO JENNY! HE'S IN *TROUBLE*-- THERE'S THIS *TANK*--AND A *TRAIN*-- AND *DR. FAYLEN!*

SLOW DOWN TERRY ALL OF YOU. GIOTTI'S IN TROUBLE *NOW*?

AND TALK *FAST*. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH *TIME*.

TARGET SUBJECT APPROXIMATELY .78 MILES DISTANT.

BEHEMOTH PROCEEDING TO CLOSE ON TARGET.

EXCELLENT.

WITH ALL THE LONG-DISTANCE SENSORS AND MOTION-CONTROL FEEDBACK SYSTEMS IN EFFECT, *TELE-PRESENCE* IS COMPLETE

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SPENT WE... OVER TEN MILLION TAXPAYER DOLLARS PERFECTING THIS *REMOTE CONTROLLER SYSTEM FOR THE MARK XII DRONE ASSAULT VEHICLE--a k a: BEHEMOTH.*

IT'S DESIGNED TO GIVE A DISTANT OPERATOR AN *EXACT SENSE* OF CURRENT BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS

IT WORKS RATHER *WELL*, I THINK.

CREEP

HE SITS HERE SAFE AND SOUND-- UHH-- WHILE THAT *TANK* GOES AFTER JENNY!

WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING... BUT FAYLEN'S GUARDS WORKED ME OVER PRETTY GOOD ONCE THEY YANKED ME INSIDE.

EVERY TIME I BREATHE, I FEEL *RIBS* SLIDIN' AROUND. HURTS SO BAD.

IF ONLY UHH I COULD REACH THE *STRONGARMS.*

THEN I'D SHOW 'EM

THEN AGAIN THEY DIDN'T EXACTLY HELP ME WHEN THOSE GUARDS GRABBED ME WHAT A JERK! I THOUGHT I WAS SOME BOY GENIUS MAKING THOSE THINGS-- AND FIRST TIME OUT THEY BOMB OUT ON ME

SENSORS TRACKING, TRACKING.

WAIT. SOMETHING'S WRONG INFRA-RED SENSORS, MOTION SENSORS--THEY'VE *LOST* HER. SHE'S NO LONGER IN THE OPEN.

KROTZE WILL HAVE MY *NECK* IF--

EH? MOTION SENSORS AND RADAR INDICATE AN *OBJECT* APPROACHING FROM THE TARGET'S LAST KNOWN POSITION.

HUGE. TOO BIG TO BE AN AN MAL-- TOO MUCH *METAL.*

CREEP!

PROXIMITY ALARM! IT'S APPROACHING *BEHEMOTH*--

"--IT'S HERE!"

HI.

LOOKING FOR ME?

STAY COOL, JEN! BUY TIME FOR TERRY AND THE OTHER TROUBLE SHOOTERS TO RESCUE GIOTTI.

KTHINK

REMEMBER, BIG AS THAT THING IS--YOU'RE IN THE M.A.X.! YOU'VE GOT SPEED AND MOBILITY ON YOUR SIDE.

SOUNDS LIKE A *SWELL* DROPPING INTO THE FIRING CHAMBER! I'VE GOT TO--

BWOOK

"EH? WHERE'S THE M.A.X.? WHERE DID SHE--?

IF THE KIDS ARE RIGHT-- IF FAYLEN *IS* DRIVING THAT THING--HE'S NO MORE FAMILIAR WITH *COMBAT* THAN I AM!

BUT I'VE GOT AN *ADVANTAGE*--

--MY *TAI CHI* TRAINING. "NEVER BE WHERE AN ENEMY *EXPECTS* YOU TO BE."

KNOCK-KNOCK, FAYLEN! COME ON OUT AND PLAY!

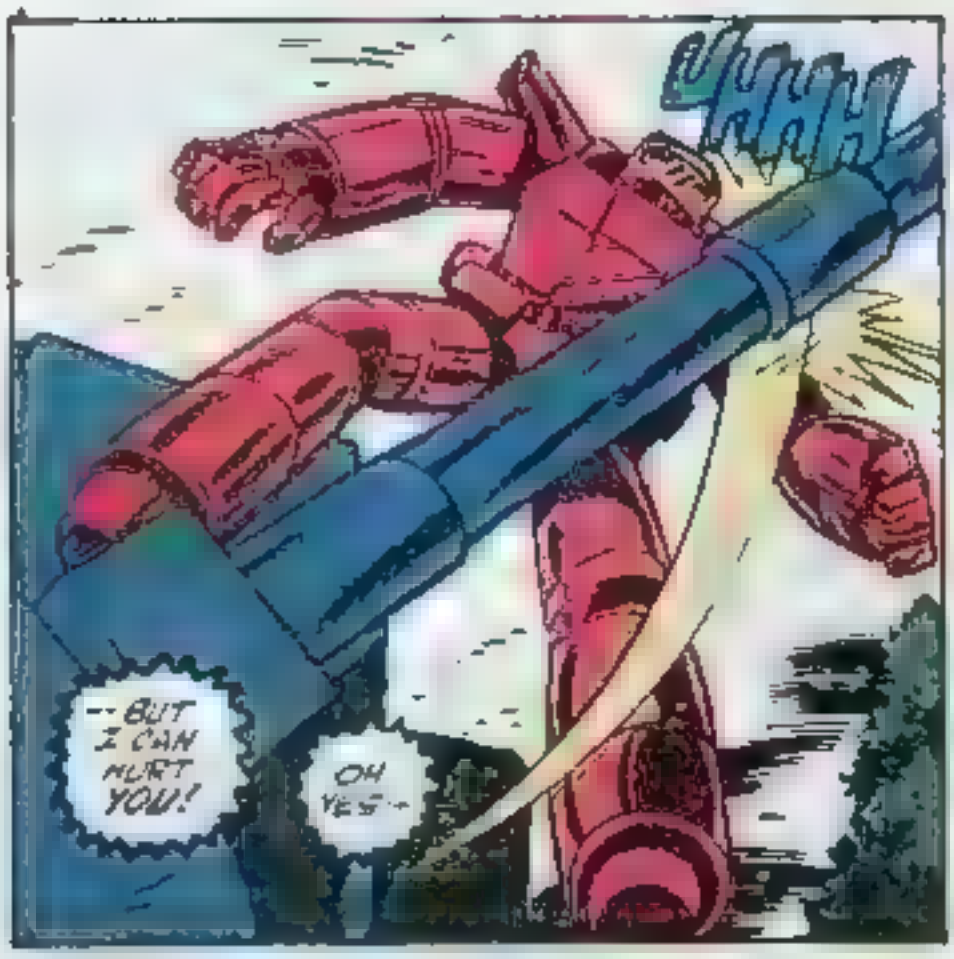
WAIT A MINUTE! I'M TRYING TO SLICE OPEN THE *HATCH* ON THIS TANK- BUT THERE'S *NO HATCH!*

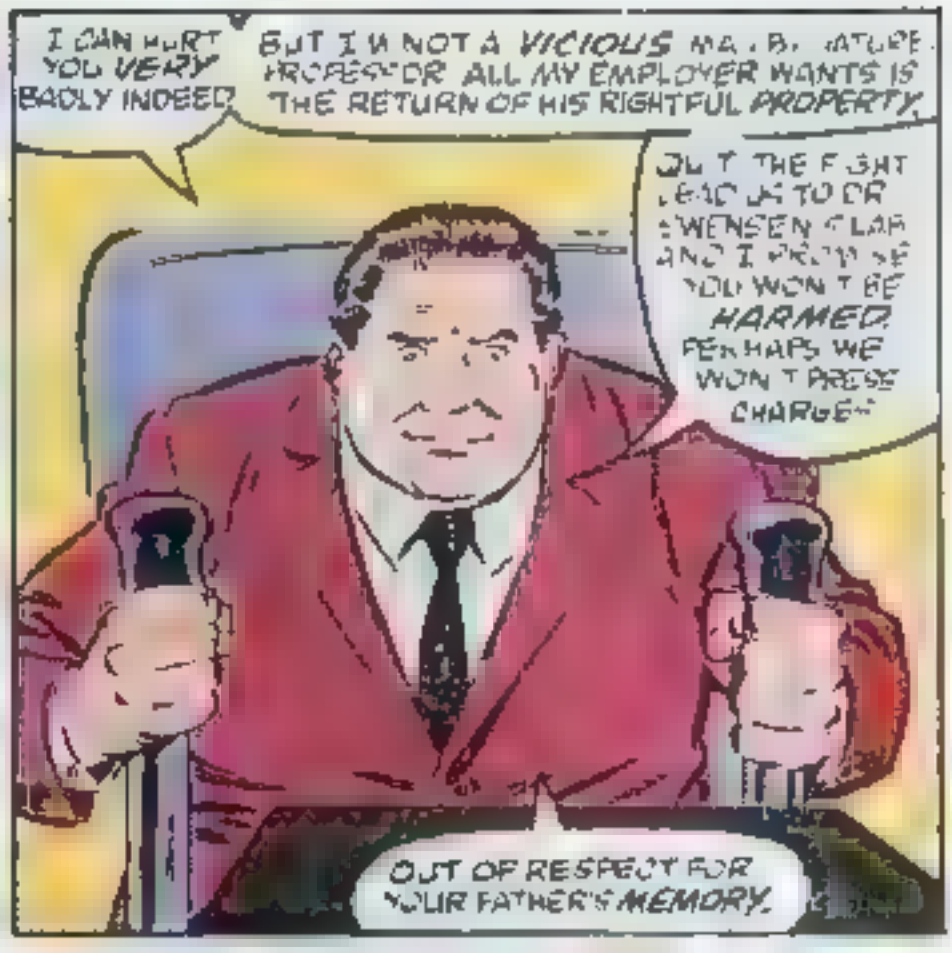
THERE'S *NOBODY INSIDE!* IT'S GOTTA BE *REMOTE CONTRO*--

UHHHH!

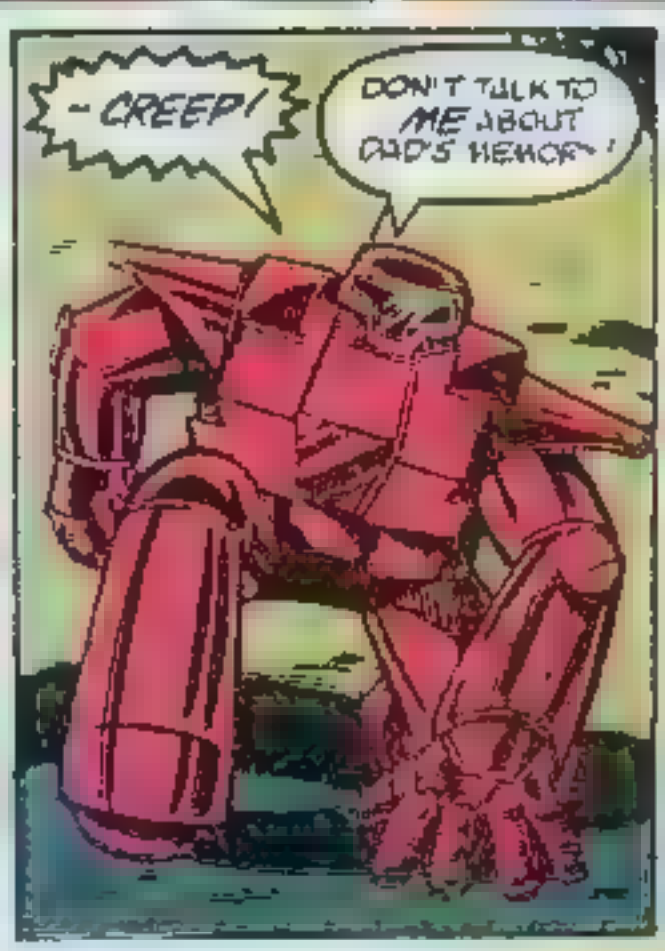
THAT'S *RIGHT*, PROFESSOR SWENSEN.

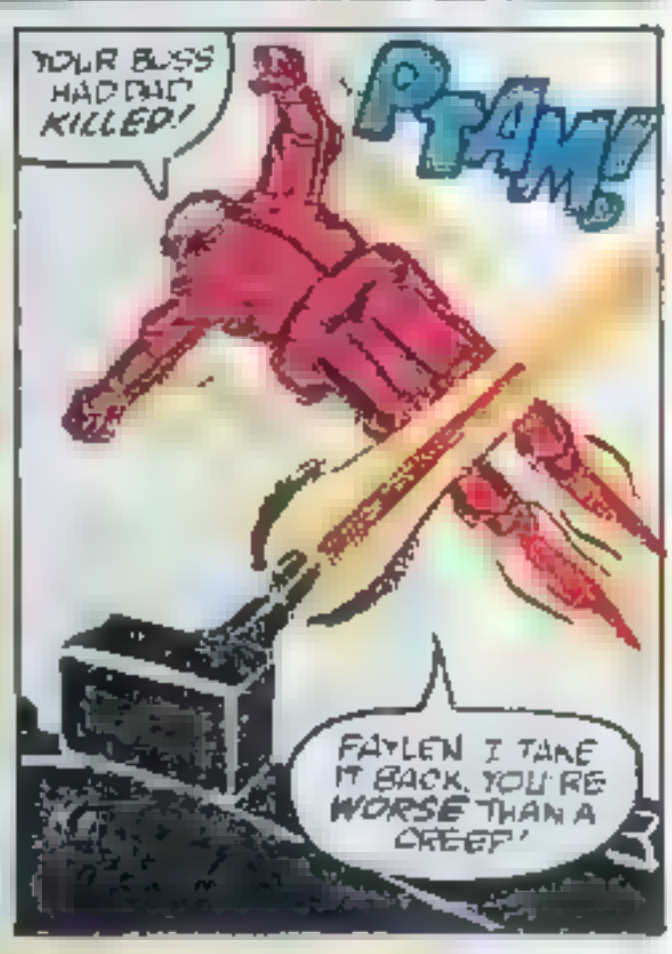
YOU CAN'T HURT ME--

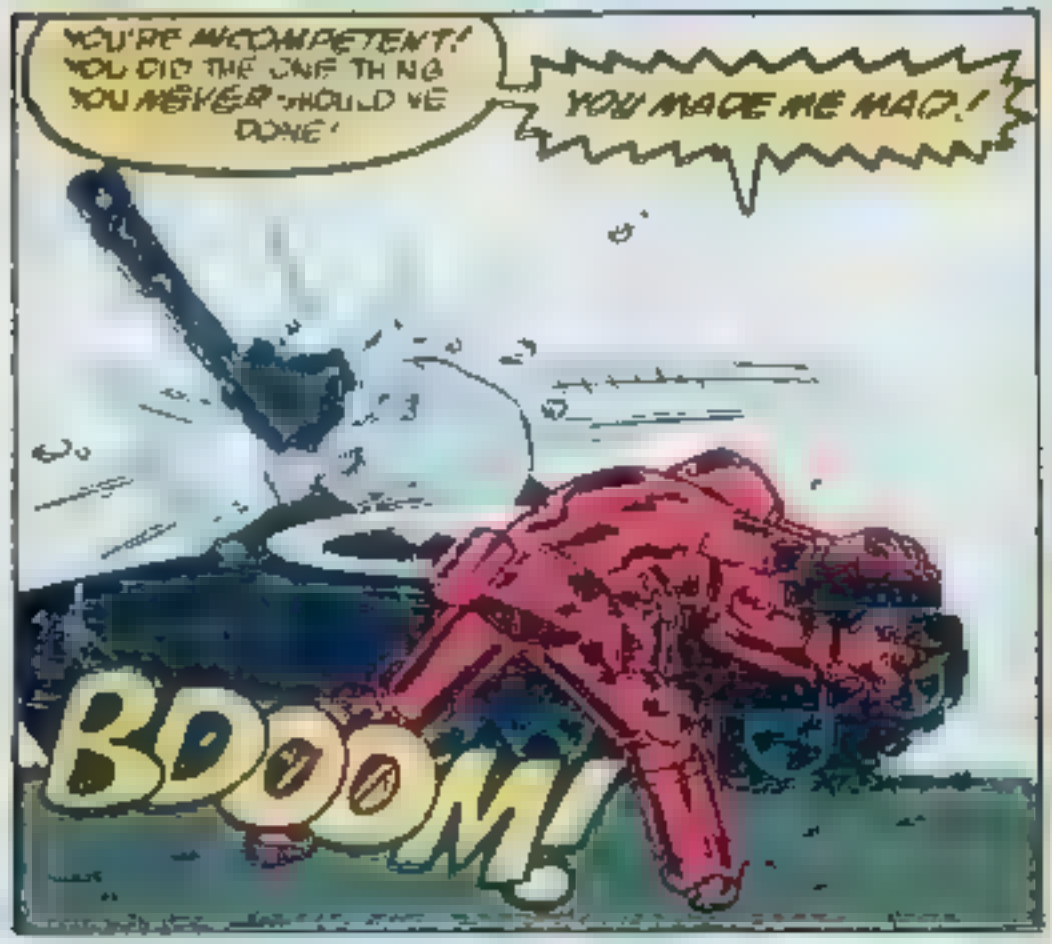

YHHH
-- BUT I CAN HURT YOU!
OH YES--

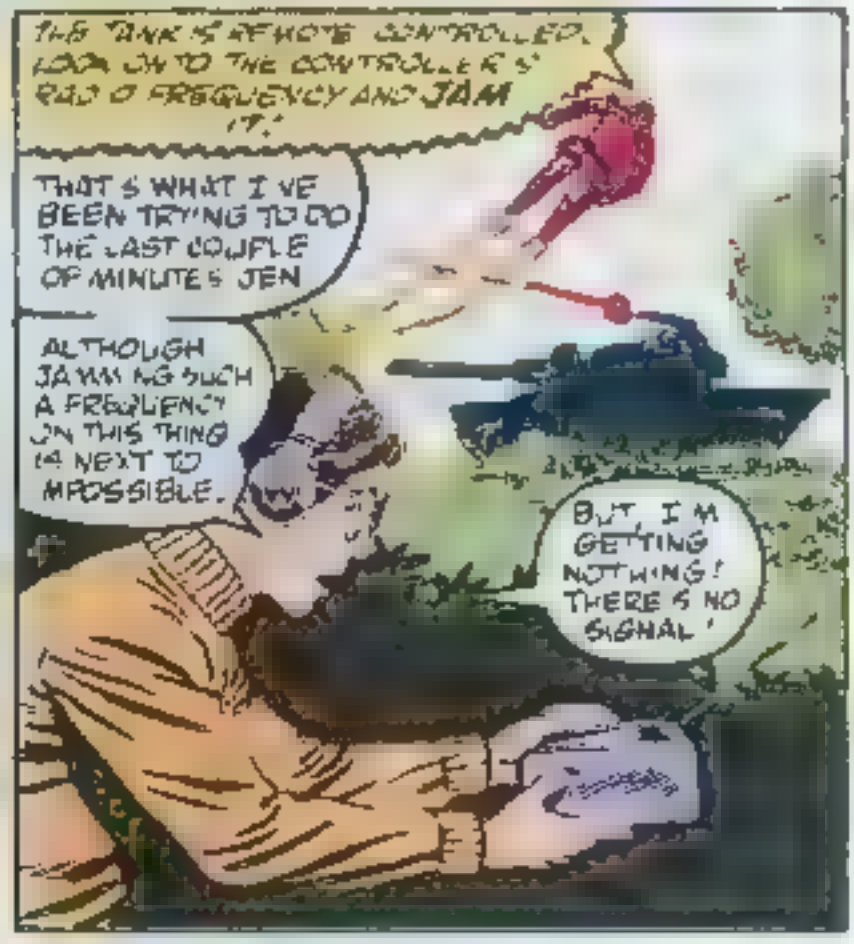

I CAN HURT YOU VERY BADLY INDEED
BUT I M NOT A VICIOUS MA . B. ATURE PROFESSOR ALL MY EMPLOYER WANTS IS THE RETURN OF HIS RIGHTFUL PROPERTY.
QU T THE F GHT LEAD JS TO DR WENSEN CLAR AND I PROM SE YOU WON T BE HARMED. PERHAPS WE WON T PRESS CHARGE--
OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR FATHER'S MEMORY.

MY FATHER S MEMORY--
WHY YOU LOUSY LITTLE


-- CREEP!
DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT DAD'S MEMOR--!


YOUR BOSS HAD DAD KILLED!
PTAM!
FAYLEN I TAKE IT BACK. YOU RE WORSE THAN A CREEP!


YOU'RE INCOMPETENT! YOU DID THE ONE TH NG YOU NEVER SHOULD VE DONE!
YOU MADE ME MAD!
BDOOM!


THE TANK S RE MOTE CONTROLLER. LOCK ON TO THE CONTROLLER S RAD O FREQUENCY AND JAM IT.
THAT S WHAT I VE BEEN TRY NG TO DO THE LAST COUPLE OF MINUTES JEN
ALTHOUGH JAM NG SUCH A FREQUENCY ON THIS THING IS NEXT TO MPOSSIBLE.
BUT, I M GETTING NOTHING! THERE S NO SIGNAL!

FTAM!

FTAM! FTAM! FTAM!

THERE'S NOTHING TO JAM!

THAT'S IM-POSSIBLE!

KROOM!

FAYLEN MUST BE OPERATING THE TANK SOMEHOW.

CHECK THE BROADCAST SPECTRUM AGAIN, ANDY! FIND THAT SIGNAL!

AND WHILE YOU DO, I'LL WORK HARD TO STAY ALIVE!

DAD DIDN'T BELIEVE IN WEAPONS HE BUILT M.A.X. AS A CONSTRUCTION SUIT

I'LL HAVE TO MAKE MODIFICATIONS.

LIKE THIS EXPLOSIVE SHELL. DAD DESIGNED IT FOR EXCAVATING DENSE GRANITE FORMATIONS

BUT IT ALSO MAKES A NIFTY TANK-BUSTER!

POOM!

SPAM!

NMMM OR IT WOULD -- IF THAT MONSTER'S ARMOR WASN'T SO THICK!

NO! WHAT AM I SAYING? BETRAYING DAD'S DREAM -- AND JOKING ABOUT IT?

KTANG!

I'M ALMOST AS BAD AS KROTTE WHEN HE -- UHHH!

DISTRACTED FOR JUST A SECOND -- THAT'S ALL IT TOOK -- FALLING -- !

BATTERED INSIDE THE M.A.X., JEKO FIGHTS TO STAY CONSCIOUS.

MEANWHILE, LESS THAN A MILE AWAY...

GUYS, WE'VE GOTTA GET GIOTTI OUT OF THAT CAR. FAST!

TIM, I'VE BEEN MONITORING JENNY AND ANDY'S TRANSMISSIONS. SHE'S IN TROUBLE.

GUYS! THAT REEL! THAT'S WHY ANDY CAN'T PINPOINT THE TANK'S CONTROL FREQUENCY.

WHAT IF THE TANK ISN'T BEING CONTROLLED BY RADIO? WHAT IF IT'S ON A FIBER-OPTIC TETHER?

SURE! THE ARMY'S BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH TELE-PRESSURE BY FIBER-OPTIC TETHER FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS!

WITH A TETHER, THERE'S NO BROADCAST SIGNAL TO JAM. JUST LIGHT-IMPULSES IN THE TETHER ITSELF.

JENNY--IT'S TERESA!

THAT TANK'S ON A WIRE.

IT'S FIBER-OPTICS. WIRE-THIN. SO YOU'VE GOT TO USE YOUR SCANNERS TO FIND IT.

FIND THE WIRE AND CUT IT--THE TANK'LL BE DEAD.

UH-HUH. GREAT ADVICE, TERRY.

I'LL DO THAT... UH... REAL SOON.

...IF I LIVE THAT LONG...

WHILE, BACK AT THE TRAIN...

KREEAK

HEY! YOU SEE THAT? THAT METAL ARM, IT--THERE! IT MOVED! ALL BY ITSELF, IT--

KLUNK KLUNK

WHAT DO WE DO? SHOOT IT? GRAB IT? WHAT?

SNEAK UPON IT--

THE STRONG ARMS! HOW IN NECK--

ERIC! YOU'RE HERE! BUT -- HOW?

TERRY IS SENDING A SIGNAL TO ACTIVATE YOUR STRONG ARMS, EDDIE-- BUT WE GOTTA MOVE QUICK. THEY WON'T BE DISTRACTED FOR LONG!

EDUARDO'S TRYING TO HIDE IT BUT I CAN SEE HE'S IN PAIN. TERESA SEES IT, TOO.

I WAS ALWAYS THE QUIET KID-- THE CLASS BRAIN-- WHY ARE THESE PEOPLE SHOOTING AT ME? HOW'D I GET INTO THIS?

AND HOW DO I GET OUT?

THAT KID WE CAUGHT--

HE'S GETTING AWAY--!

FORGET HIM. THE BOSS WANTS THE SUIT--

"--NOT SOME STUPID KID AND FAYLEN'S GOT THE SUIT COVERED."

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THE MORE I ATTACK HER, THE HARDER SWENSEN FIGHTS BACK!

I DON'T DARE USE ADDITIONAL FIREPOWER. I WON'T KILL FOR KROTZE, AND BESIDES, HE WANTS THE M.A.X. IN ONE PIECE. IF I DESTROY IT, HE'LL CRUCIFY ME...

TALK ABOUT SLOW LEARNERS-- I FINALLY REALIZED FAYLEN'S HOLDING BACK! HE'S AFRAID TO DAMAGE THE SUIT! THAT'S WHAT THEY REALLY WANT.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE THAT PROBLEM, DO WE, JEN?

SWENSEN-- STOP!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

NEAT TRICK, HUH, FAYLEN?

KRAKOOM

AW, I BROKE YOUR CANNON.

YOU SHOULD'VE ACED ME WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE, FAYLEN-- INSTEAD YOU GAVE ME JUST ENOUGH TIME TO CATCH MY BREATH AGAIN.

BIG MISTAKE.

THIS MUST BE YOUR PUPPETS' STRING. HUH?

THIN AS A HUMAN HAIR-- I NEVER WOULD HAVE FOUND IT IF I HADN'T USED THE MAX'S MAGNIFYING SCANNERS.

KLIK

SWENSEN-- JENNIFER-- WAIT!

THE NAME IS SPITFIRE!!

WE CAN MAKE AN ARRANGEMENT. JUST TALK WITH KROTZE! YOU'RE GETTING INVOLVED IN SOMETHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T

AND FRANKLY, MY DEAR FAYLEN-- I DON'T CARE. I'VE JUST HAD IT!

SNIK

BZZZZZZZZZ

OH MY--

NOW I'VE DONE IT!

KWHOOM

JENNY, YOU DID IT!

NOT YET, ANDY!

NOT--

JUST--

--YET!

AND BOY, DOES IT FEEL GOOD.

BUT THAT'S A LIE. IN THE BACK OF HER MIND, IN HER MOST SECRET PLACE, JENNY HEARS HER FATHER WHISPERING WITH DISAPPROVAL--

"JENNY, JENNY-- DID I RAISE YOU TO DESTROY?"

IN HIS COMMAND CHAIR, PROF. RICHARD FAYLEN TREMBLES WITH RAGE.

STATIC-FILLED MONITORS SEEM TO MOCK HIM, AND FOR AN INSTANT, HE FORGETS EVERYTHING EXCEPT HIS ANGER.

BUT THE MOMENT DOESN'T LAST.

TOO SOON, HE REMEMBERS FRITZ KROTZE.

AND ANGER TURNS TO CLAMMY FEAR...

SCRATCH ONE SUPER-TANK.

LET'S SEE KROTZE EXPLAIN THAT TO THE PENTAGON.

JEN, ABOUT EDDIE--

HE'S HURT.

HURT?

ON THE WAY HERE HE PASSED OUT. LIKE HE WAS HOLDING HIMSELF TOGETHER-- JUST BARELY-- TILL WE GOT HIM.

WHAT DID THEY DO TO HIM?

BEAT HIM UP.

HIS RIBS FEEL LIKE BROKEN GLASS.

BEFORE HE PASSED OUT HE WANTED ME TO TELL YOU HE WAS SORRY HE MESSED THINGS UP.

OH, EDDIE...

NO MORE DELAYS. NO MORE HESITATION.

I'M COMING AFTER YOU, KROTZE.

NOW.

"COUNTER-ATTACK!"

SPITFIRE AT THE TURNING POINT.!"